

Mime troupe brings political drama here

The San Francisco Mime Troupe, a renowned guerrilla theatre company, will bring its unique and controversial drama to UNC Friday, Oct. 29. Their repertoire includes a new full-length production, "The Dragon Lady's Revenge," a production centering around the drug crisis in Southeast Asia and satirical skits performed by the Gutter Puppets and Gorilla Marching Band.

Influenced by the tradition of Renaissance Italy's Commedia dell'Arte, they use a tiny stage (12 feet square) with sweeping movement, exaggerated gestures and frequent "asides" to increase audience involvement and a feeling of intimate contact.

According to the Los Angeles Times, "the troupe has found ways to make the commedia style a singularly apt vehicle for political drama."

Founded in 1959 as an alternative to commercial theatre, the San Francisco

Mime Troupe attacks in form and content many generally accepted conditions of American life and art. Without the support of city, state or federal funds, the Mime Troupe has created a theatre which is committed to social protest in an effort to teach, direct toward change and to be an example of change. It stays solvent by passing the hat after summer park shows and by spring and fall college engagements.

In the name of "engagement, commitment and fresh air" the Troupe has won praise from critics throughout America and in 1968 was awarded an off-Broadway "Obie" Award.

The Troupe's unusual Gutter Puppets and Gorilla Marching Band will stage a set of satirical skits Friday, Oct. 29 at noon in the Pit.

Admittedly and intentionally irreverent, the Gutter Puppets and Band mix art and politics in their revue. As the

Detroit News said of the Troupe: "praise them because they address themselves to issues which many other segments of theatre seem determined to avoid."

Using techniques such as paper movies, puppets, musical instruments, circus techniques and people, the puppet and band shows which the Troupe will perform focus on current issues and pose radical alternatives. The topics include the politics behind the Great Ecology Scare, the Bell Telephone System, the draft, and army life. The Troupe will also perform feats of juggling and acrobatics.

The troupe will present its oriental mystery-thriller, "The Dragon Lady's Revenge," at 8 p.m. the same Friday in Memorial Hall.

The "Revenge," the Mime Troupe's newest full-length production, is said to be an expose of the drug crisis in Southeast Asia. Since the anti-drug play opened one month ago in the parks of the Bay Area, audiences have been asked to fill out a questionnaire indicating their experience with addictive narcotics and whether they find the information provided to be credible.

The overwhelming majority of those who see the play indicate they believe allegations that the CIA and U.S.-supported Asian governments are responsible for the production and trafficking of heroin.

The plot of "The Dragon Lady's Revenge" was inspired by these allegations. Several characters are based on real-life figures like Vice-President Ky and Madame Nhu. The play is staged and costumed as a burlesque of the oriental melodramas popular in the 1930's movies with many satiric jokes aimed at the unscrupulous power structure.

Tickets for the San Francisco Mime Troupe's Memorial Hall performance will be on sale or \$1.50 beginning today at the Union Information Desk. The Troupe's appearance is sponsored by the Union Drama Committee.

Leaders laud role of outdoor theatre

by Bruce Mann
Assistant Feature Editor

Four national leaders in the field of theatre art, in Chapel Hill Saturday to attend the Institute of Outdoor Drama's 9th Annual Managers and Directors Conference, see outdoor drama as an increasingly important constituent of the American theatre.

The four were Charles Mark, consultant to the American Bicentennial Commission; Mrs. Ruth Mayleas, Theatre Program Director, National Endowment for the Arts; William H. Inglis, Associate Executive Director of the American Theatre Association; and Frederic Vogel of the Foundation for the Extension and Development of the American Professional Theatre.

The increased importance of outdoor drama is perhaps best reflected in the support accorded it by federal groups.

Speaking for the Endowment for the Arts, Mrs. Mayleas said that "There has been assistance to outdoor drama in a number of cases, through the states."

The Bicentennial Commission, too, is attempting to foster private grants for outdoor drama through its time-limited resources.

"At the least, the Bicentennial Commission will encourage outdoor drama with kind words and promotion," said Mark.

"At the most, support might conceivably take the form of some sponsorship and encouragement in the development of outdoor dramas where they don't exist at the present time or where there is a hope of development."

Noting the continuing interest and increase in attendance of outdoor dramas across the country, Inglis spoke of the solid business management of these production which makes them such unusually stable theatrical concerns in comparison to other types of theatre across the country and which accounts for their growing artistic strength.

"The large number of outdoor dramas are pretty well managed and well promoted. They also have the tourist attraction factor, and since there has been a tremendous growth in the number of outdoor dramas recently, more and more people are seeing them and supporting them."

Inglis also feels that "outdoor drama is experiencing increased popularity because theatre in general is becoming more and more a part of the lives of the people."

Vogel, in his remarks, cited the themes of outdoor drama, as much as their business management, as the reason for outdoor drama's popularity and theatrical importance.

"One of our problems in this country is that so much of what we have done has been imitative of other countries and other cultures. But I think outdoor drama is very organic to us—not that they don't have pageants in Europe—but there is an

additional thing in that the outdoor drama deals with us as a people."

So if you go see any outdoor drama you see that which deals with some part of our history, some part of us as a nation, which we are then more likely to look at and see in that portion of our identity."

In summing up the importance of the outdoor drama in American theatre, Mark said that outdoor drama, in bringing live performances to audiences who might not normally attend the theatre, "has helped make the arts more acceptable" to a greater number of people.

Leaven Cabal

See 'Sweetback'

Melvin Van Peebles' "Sweet Sweetback's Bad Asssss Song" is probably as ugly a film as has ever been made. Yet precisely for that reason—because Van Peebles is a black man who looks at white America with soul-wrenching hatred and contempt, and a director of dizzying if undisciplined skill—"Sweetback" is required viewing for any serious film-goer.

"Sweetback" stars "The Black Community," and because Van Peebles is a quintessentially visual director who communicates through concrete symbol and juxtaposition, this means all the artifacts of a people who have been corrupted, brutalized, and bestialized by white society: the sagging breasts of a black whore, the shoddy perversity of a sex show, the squalid "luxury" of a pimp, and all the physical and spiritual filth that disfigures the ghetto.

But Van Peebles lets his preoccupation with surfaces lead him astray. Apparently we are supposed to witness the awakening of Sweetback's racial and human dignity, and his realization that the black sub-culture in America is nothing but the bastard child of a dying white society. But the point is never driven home. Van Peebles' whites lack the human and moral complexity that makes evil terrifying: they're anemic bullies and hypocrites, apish Hell's Angels, or scrawny cops who maim or kill their black victims for the sheer fun of it. And the blacks, Sweetback included, are hardly more attractive.

Lacking this kind of development, "Sweetback" becomes literally an anthology of the possible in film editing. It is an incredible tour de force of cinematography, but eventually it is Van Peebles' abundance that makes him poor. "Sweetback" starts in overdrive and can go no higher: there is no relative pacing, no repose, no chance to catch one's breath, and the ultimate effect is oppressive.

And in seeking the photogenic side even of degradation, Van Peebles' camera becomes so shot-oriented that one finally begins to suspect that the torture, blood, and perverse sexuality serve no other purpose than to titillate the audience. Occasionally Van Peebles does conceive an entire sequence—as when he captures the almost miasmic quality of a motorcycle in its breathless camera work and its moral ugliness. In both these attributes "Sweetback" is peculiarly modern. It is a descent into hell, and even if, as I suspect, that hell exists mainly in the director's soul, it is nevertheless a trip most people will want to take.

"WALKABOUT" WAS SHOT entirely in Australia, by Mike Molloy and Tony Richmond, and it is a cinematic marvel. It overflows with gawky kangaroos and koala bears, meticulous close-ups of exotic insects and delicately-colored lizards, and spectacular dawns and sunsets, wholly appropriate in the context of the primitive, untouched landscape. Maggots devouring an animal's carcass are gruesome but not frightening, and an aborigine leaping gracefully over the sands is the embodiment of a still from "The Family of Man."

If it sounds something like National Geographic, it is. To its advantage. The

film captures Australia's awesome beauty. "Walkabout" falters, unfortunately, under a not-quite-believable plot and a patched-on moral. A 16-year-old girl (Jenny Agutter) and her six-year-old brother (Lucien Bond) wander through the outlands after their father has tried to kill them. Failing that, he has killed himself and set their VW on fire. The film suggests that civilization has deranged him, but perhaps he has just flipped out. The point is not made clear.

As the children wander, hungry and thirsty, they encounter a young aborigine (David Gumpili) who feeds them, shelters them, and leads them to a deserted house once occupied by whites.

Up to this point the moral is understated and director Nicholas Roeg is content to let us watch an idyllic, sometimes funny existence. (After two days in the desert the little boy says, "I'm fed up!") Animals are killed, but only for food, and noiselessly, with spears. Abruptly, however, civilization clatters into the wilds in the person of two ruthless hunters who destroy wildlife indiscriminately. With their jeep and high powered rifles, they represent a destructive force against which the old, "natural" life is powerless, and the aborigine mourns its passing in a ceremonial dance of death. The children return to civilization, and we last see the sister in her apartment, happily married but dreaming nostalgically of her adventure.

But this is hokey nostalgia. While the little boy is young enough to accept the primitive life matter-of-factly, his sister cannot. Temporarily charmed by the quaintness of primitive life, she dreams of showers and clean sheets. The audience is in the same boat. Roeg is obviously aware that primal innocence cannot exist, or at least endure, but he tries to make us wish it could. His Australian Eden is a fairyland, and a fairyland's charm lies in its unreality. Surely he could have given us the magnificent colors and graceful forms without editorializing. They speak for themselves.

Harding solos in Hill tonight

John Harding, trumpeter, will be featured in tonight's Tuesday Evening Concert which will begin at 8 pm in Hill Hall.

Harding will be assisted by Dr. Richard Buck, piano, who is an associate professor in the Chemistry Department. Several other instrumentalists will also appear in the concert, which is free of charge and open to the public.

The program will open with Aldrovandidi's "Sonata for Two Trumpets." Torelli's D major trumpet concerto will feature Harding on a german D trumpet, Buck on harpsichord, and Miss Logan, cello.

Other works on the program include Arutjunjan's "Konzert für Trompete mit Klavier" and "Konzert Piece for Trumpet and Piano (1954)" by William Mayer.

The final work in the concert will be a new work by Harding himself, titled "Sweet Battle Suite."

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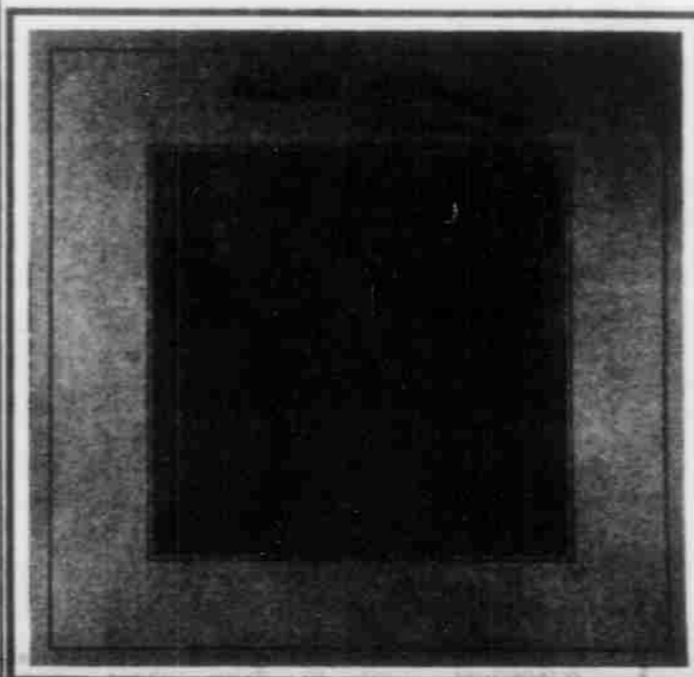
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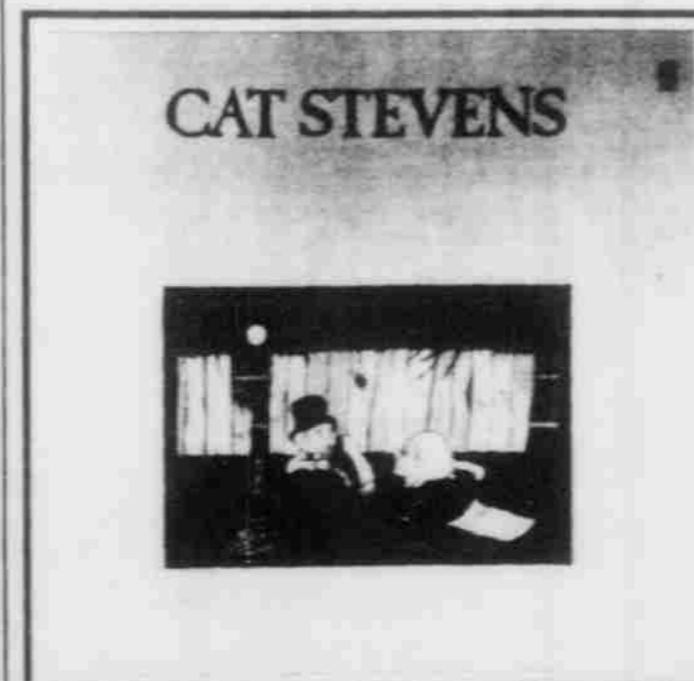
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